

369 E 15TH AVE  
COLUMBUS OH  
43201





**THE DEVIL IS ELECTRIC**  
 JANUARY 6  
 9 o'clock - 15th  
 MAKE IT'S

**THE GOOD GOOD**  
 15th

DEFIANCE, OHIO

BRING YR BIKE FOR AN AFTER SHOW BIKE RIDE.

**KICKBALL MT. GIGANTIC**

along with

**NUCLEAR WINTER and YON SONGS**  
 Saturday, August 20th, 9p at 369 E 15th \$5

later this month:

Monday, Aug 20th  
 Bureaux (californian noisy sludge)  
 the Hospitals (noise-rock fuckers)  
 Tundra (sodaspeedy crust)  
 Tumor Feast (not broken up!)  
 Voatirocity (film show!)

**Circle dead children**

**MENTAL**

**SAT. FEB 26**  
 @ RWTG  
 369 E. 15th AVE., COLS. OH

**REDBIRD**  
 BOOKS-TO-PRISONERS BENEFIT

**DEFIANCE, OHIO**  
 Columbus Expatriates Rollicking Acoustic Punk Anthems with Violin, Cello and Banjo

**TURN PALE**  
 Bloomington, Indiana's Death Rock Disco Postpunk

**ANNARANGER**  
 Local Pretty Boy Trio Synthesizer Pop Sensations

**SILVER DIAMOND PIGEONS**  
 Tangly songs with Ukulele and Euphonium and John Handsome

@ Legion of Doom  
 1579 Indianola  
 Fri Jan 21  
 \$5/please 9pm

between the devil and the deep blue sea

defiance, ohio

special appearance by **the nug'**

THURS JUNE 10th  
 369 E. 15th  
 9pm

show/party

there will be a POTLUCK  
 BRING SOMETHING TASTY TO SHARE

**the dance dogs**  
 a puppetry show

Appearing at  
**GOODALE PARK GARDEN**  
 NEAR CORNER OF BUTLER AND N PARK ST)

**7 PM**

with **BREAD AND ROSES**  
 a 7-piece old timey folk band from boston the seven pieces are...

and **YONI GORDEN**  
 electric guitar and voice, also from boston

and all the way from cincinnati... the poetic stylings of **FRANCIS HOPEWELL**  
 buy him a 40 oz after the show

**DIRTY SOUTH PUNK ROCK PARTY**

**MONDAY, MAY 16th**

@ the 24/7  
 2407 WEST AVE.

7pm \$5

**THE EVELYNS** (little rock star)  
 GOOD ASS SWAMP MYSTERY MUSIC

**PIEDMONSTER** (wonder boy NC)  
 dancey people party come shake your junk

**RICHMOND BREAD RIOT**  
 LIKE BLEACH-ERA MINIVANS-2-PICEROS

**HOT NEW MEXICANS**  
 rock, actually love the (unconventional) first replacement to the album

DRESS LIKE SOME GOOD OLD DIRTY SOUTH WHITE TRASH!!

**SAT. NOV. 19th 10 P.M.**

**AUSTIN LUCAS**  
 Mt. beautiful voice slaying country bluegrass folk blend

**GRIMWOOD SON**  
 Columbus's darling heritager of the apocalyptic psychobellie doom/folk

**BRYAN PARKER**  
 The softer side of boards

**ELEGANCE GERALD**  
 Metamorphosis rock

**COOL BASEMENT SHOW**

**GAL AND LAD**  
 FEMME POP DUO FROM WISCONSIN. WILL THEY HAVE A SMOKE MACHINE?

**KYOTO PROTOCOL**  
 SWEET MELODIES THAT WILL MELT YOUR GEAR FASTER THAN THE HEAT WAVE. NEWLY REFORMED!

**THE FLOTATION WALLS**

**RACCOON**  
 HEAVY ROCK SHIT

**FRIDAY SEPT 30th**  
**7 PM**

with **BREAD AND ROSES**  
 a 7-piece old timey folk band from boston the seven pieces are...

and **YONI GORDEN**  
 electric guitar and voice, also from boston

and all the way from cincinnati... the poetic stylings of **FRANCIS HOPEWELL**  
 buy him a 40 oz after the show

**ballast**  
 appalachian terror unit

**bohemia grove**

oct 17th 369 e 15th ave

**SAT. 18th**  
 15th

**RACHEL JACOBI**  
 HEAVY ROCK MUSIC

**DEFIANCE OHIO**

**THE 15th HOUSE**  
 15th AVE.  
 \$1 SHOW FREE BEER

**JAPANTHER**  
 15th AVE.

**THE GOOD GOOD**  
 Breakfast Punk Punk Punk Punk Punk

**ERIN TOKEY**  
 A Minneapolis City Punk Punk Punk Punk Punk

**NATE POWELL**  
 A Minneapolis City Punk Punk Punk Punk Punk



this has been

griot number

four. additional

copies are two

postage stamps.

many thanks to,

my friends, and

family including

but not only

special thanks to

geoff hing, defiance

ohio, jim straub,

chad brunk and

the boss.

THESE TITLES CAN BE GOTTEN FROM ME  
FOR FREE SINCE I HAVE FREE COPIES WHERE  
I LIVE. SEND SOME MONEY OR STAMPS PLEASE  
TO COVER POSTAGE. **I LIKE TRADES**

GRIOT #2 - STORIES FROM A PUNK ROCK RITE OF PASSAGE  
GUEST ESSAYS FROM GEOFF HING OF DEFIANCE, OHIO

GRIOT #3 - "WHERE THE HELL IS BOBBY JOE SCARECROW"  
ONE TRUE STORY ABOUT TWO GIRLS IN SEARCH OF  
A LONG LOST LOVE

GRIOT #5 - PART TWO OF THE COLLECTED STORIES ABOUT COLUMBUS,  
OHIO, COMING SOON.

TORN AND FRAYED #1-3 - FRANCIS POSPISIL'S BEAUTIFUL AND POIGNANT  
SAD BASTARD STORIES.

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL - ONE OF FRANCIS POSPISIL'S POETRY CHAPBOOK  
DAYS IN, NIGHT OUT - SEE ABOVE

GIDEON #3-4- EMOTIONAL WRITINGS BY ERIC KANE FULL OF BITTER HOPE  
AMAZING LAYOUT

RIDE ON #7 - JIM STRAUB'S EPIC ZINE THAT GOES FROM THE SUBURBS OF  
PHILLY TO SOUTH AMERICA AND RICHMOND, VA.

SCRAG COMPILATIONS ISSUE - A FAT COLLECTION OF THE LATEST EDITIONS  
OF MY COLUMBUS ZINE COHORT

BIG HANDS #1 - A VERY LITERARY AND CLEVER ZINE FROM  
PIEDMONSTER'S AARON SMITH

LITTLE LIES AUDIO ZINE - A TAPE CASSETTE COMP FEATURING THE AUTHORS  
OF SCRAG, GRIOT, TORN AND FRAYED AND RIDE ON  
TELLING THERE STORIES IN THEIR OWN WORDS.

WRITE TO ME AT

brian deller  
369 e 15th ave  
columbus oh  
43201  
ieatfood123@  
hotmail.com



I never got the tattoo.

## *Get Drunk* by Charles Baudelaire

ONE SHOULD always be drunk. That's all that matters; that's our one imperative need. So as not to feel Time's horrible burden that breaks your shoulders and bows you down, you must get drunk without ceasing.

But what with? With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you choose. But get drunk.

And if, at some time, on the steps of a palace, in the green grass of a ditch, in the bleak solitude of your room, you are waking up when drunkenness has already abated, ask the wind, the wave, a star, the clock, all that which flees, all that which groans, all that which rolls, all that which sings, all that which speaks, ask them what time it is; and the wind, the wave, the star, the bird, the clock will reply: 'It is time to get drunk! So that you may not be the martyred slaves of Time, get drunk; get drunk, and never pause for rest! With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you choose!'





## PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

As you slip into astrological prime time, you'll be shedding inhibitions and becoming more forthright about being yourself. Secrets that were inaccessible to you until now will finally reveal themselves, spurring you to peak performances. Exciting insights you were too timid to own before will erupt, empowering you to express creativity that has been dormant. There's just one small downside: Your rise to the next level could attract the disapproval of people who prefer the safety of mediocrity. My advice? Tell them to go to hell—in the most tactful possible way, of course. (P.S. For inspiration, keep in mind this idea from Friedrich Nietzsche: "Those who were dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.")

I never found what I was looking for that whole time. The hat only led me back home. I can't be sad, I mean I never really knew what I was looking for in the first place. Like some rite of passage folk tale I returned from whence I departed with some sort of self-knowledge accumulated from the year of on ramps, trainyards and truckstops. I resumed taking classes with my scholarship that I returned to just in time. I didn't need to go anywhere to pursue the elusive, that which led me away a year before. And to let my only opportunity to attend a university slip away from me would have been the biggest middle class brat move I could have ever done. That was someone that I was not.

Soon after I started the new quarter my beloved hat slipped from my possession. I'm not sure where I lost it but it was gone. I was surprised to be so sad over a piece of fashion. I called everyone I knew and double checked places I was at that week. I suppose 'Lil Mo's hat had taken me as far as it could now that my journey was over. Off to a new cranium to guide through the hazy wilds of a young soul's search for the uncanny. I guess it knew I really didn't need it anymore. Though my head was done growing, I had outgrown it. Then, a few weeks later I spotted it. This punk kid who works in the main library on campus was wearing it. He goes as "Cooter", hangs out with the drunks at Bernies and does screenprinting with a friend of mine sometimes. My nostalgia of good memories under the brim of that hat almost made me ask him for it back. But I couldn't. That was an era that was done. Sometimes we lose things for a reason. And sometimes we find them for another. And plus, Cooter looked really good in my hat.

That was the last time I ever saw 'Lil Mo's hat. I wonder what happened to Cooter? I never saw him again. Was he on the verge of setting off to search for what couldn't be found in the library? I wonder where the hat took him. Among the on ramps, trainyards and truckstops possibly. I wonder where 'Lil Mo is and what she was like. That's a story I will never know. Sometimes the stories we don't know are the best ones. It's never good to let some material possession define who you are. I couldn't resist change and that was part of why I set out in the first place. What would life have been like if I had never found that lost hat on the side of 4<sup>th</sup> avenue? Something else I will never know. What I do know is that my days at the university are nearly over and something within me remains unsatiated. There is an urge that I once knew that grows familiar again. I don't know if I'll ever find the answers. But I know where I might start looking and I don't think I need any headgear to begin.



# LOST HAT

When I was nineteen I dropped out of college. I made an unsuspecting break from my expected fate. I had nearly a 4.0, was enrolled in the honors program and had a full ride academic scholarship. I had things made but something was just not right. So I began a new life inhabiting on ramps, trainyards and truckstops. There was real learning to see to and these were the only places I could find it. I was in search of something but I didn't know what it was. All I knew was I wasn't going to find it within the white walls of academia. I needed to be lost. It was going to take some time. I had some money saved and I needed to be creative to make it last the duration of my new research.

Before I left my home in the student ghetto I stumbled upon a lost hat on the sidewalk. I was walking down 4th avenue with BZ by her house when we came upon it. There was a patch I had acquired the month before that needed something to go onto. It was made out of pink fabric with grey stripes that must have been a pillowcase in a previous life. Screenprinted on the patch was three children parading in a line. I snatched up the black mesh hat from off the concrete and tried to decipher the front. "Lil Mo" it proclaimed in graffiti style lettering done in silver paint pen. Arrows and asterisks highlighting the title of the cap, this was quite a find. Too bad for whoever Mo was. Some girlfriend of a local graffiti writer perhaps, she should have held onto her headwear tighter while flying down 4<sup>th</sup> avenue. The hat was crisp and new and in a day would have that pink patch of mine stitched onto it for the world to see. It would accompany me for the duration of search. 'Lil Mo could never have imagined the things her lost hat would do.

Almost a year later I arrived back to the student ghetto. It was New Years Eve and I dropped in at every party I knew my friends might be at. I was moving back into my old house, just blocks from where I had discovered "Lil Mo's lost hat. It used to be shiny, synthetic black and lost on the sidewalk. Now it was more a shade of brown, worn in and snug to the shape of my head. Innumerable hours it spent around my cranium, shading me from the sun and covering up bad haircuts. "Lil Mo would not be able to recognize it has her lost if she had the chance. She would have to peel away the pink patch of kids parading with trombones and flags, now almost totally faded. Maybe the same could have been said about myself. I didn't look too much different from when I left. But on the contrary, what is beneath is what took a

griot

number

four

January

2006

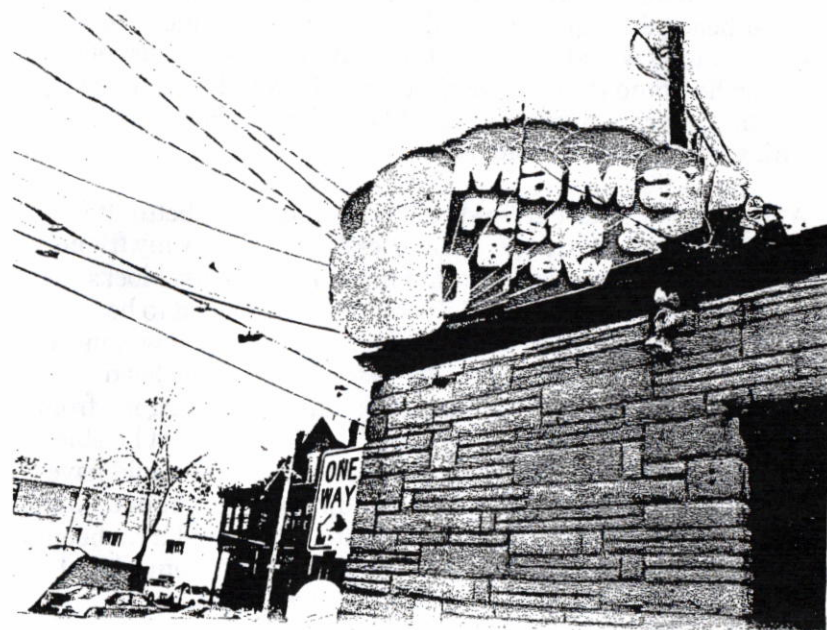






nothing. Maybe they've forgot the meaning of the punk nod as adults and maybe it meant nothing to them in the first place. I guess that's why people like Jim, despite his comfortable life in the punk subculture take their rebellion further and further as they age. They become things like union organizers working 60 hours a week driving a car all day long. I guess there comes a time when a punk's need for rebellion is no longer satisfied by bad haircuts, graffiti and petty theft. That's about when they start having suburban dad at a football game fashion sense. So don't let their mild manner looks fool you, their passion for the downfall of the rich and our culture of mediocrity is fiercer and brighter than that young punk's green mohawk at the show the night before. And they'll drink you under the table any day whether beer or coffee.

Lately I've been wearing sweat pants more often. Sometimes even to punk shows. I would have never imagined myself doing so even a year ago. I guess I'm on my way to the same place that Jim has went. It's either something like that or admitting that punk is just teenage rebellion. When you see me on the street, you'll know that my heart is true no matter what my sweatpants tell you, by the nod and wink I'm giving you.





# NOT SO DISTANT PAST

"Dude is not hung over at all. Dude is still drunk from the night before!" Jim breaks his silence exploding in laughter almost spilling what remains in his cup all over his hand. I'm just shaking my head. The drunk punk comes back out now accompanied by a young woman who appears to be his girlfriend. She walks right past us, her oversized hoodie a patchwork of crust punk patches, without even blinking. We don't even get a goodbye from our "hungover" friend.

"Yeah....the PUNKS!" Nasals Jim as they stomp up the sidewalk past us. Still not even a peep from the pair. A few seconds pass and Jim exhales. It sounds like years of stale dust leaving his lungs. Not a word passes between us for a minute. Finally, I look at him shaking my head.

"Jim have you ever looked at yourself in the mirror lately?" I don't give him time to respond. "Too them you don't look like a punk in the slightest." He's grinning his shit eating grin again. I continue. "You look like a schmo with your sensible haircut, old running shoes, baggy jeans and leatherjacket. A schmo. And that leather jacket. Its not like Dee Dee Ramone wore, no that is a jacket that is more likely to be found on the back of excited fatherly figure at OSU football game." The thing to note is that Jim has always looked like this. My tirade continues, "You're on a level of punk that far surpasses so many out there in ways they don't even know. You've ridden trains, traveled penniless, fought cops in the streets in more than one country, lived in squats, survived off of trash, met all the zine superstars, sang guest backup vocals on a record that would go for ten times its face value on Ebay. Your involvement with punk culture is so tantamount that its seems to have transcended all needs for aesthetic reinforcement. And thus the remarkable nature of your persona is lost to so many of your brethren out there. They probably thought you were mocking them!" Jim's just laughing again, snorting coffee through his nose trying to reply.

"Oh well, they're the other kind of punks anyway and probably wouldn't understand even if we tried."

They're the kind of punks that we fear that we are becoming in our old age. The ones where only thing that separates them from the rest of mainstream society are a different set of CDs and a different cut of clothes. In essence,

If Ohio is "the heart of it all" according to its license plates, then what does that, located at its geographic center, make Columbus? The search for authenticity is a pastime that seems to dominate our so called "postmodern" society. Nobody knows what the authentic looks like but they sure are looking hard to find it. My advice is to stop looking. Then maybe you'll find something more important. There is an honesty here that is not easily replicated. I think it comes from finding yourself in a place you know is shit and don't care. Call it Midwest charm but don't call it inertia.

Wherever I visit I find myself among strangers, "I'm not originally from here" is a common phrase on the tongues of those I meet. In my city that I never chose these words are not uttered as often as other more sought after locales. There is an authenticity born from the underappreciated nature of this place. Where in other places everybody is a stranger, an emigrant, everyone here has roots, or at least those that stay. Most all of my friends in Columbus grew up somewhere in Ohio if not then not so far away. We come here to go to college, to live in the big city or to escape the memories of our youth. Just a baby step away from where we were born. In a way this makes it very unique with the shared experience of growing up in the same boundaries. We stay cause we got nothing better to do. Every year may not be as good as the last but at least we know our corner of the world well. A home is not much of home without history and it feels we all have some of that. This zine is about something sorta like that. This is part one of my collected stories written while living in the capital of Ohio. Just trying to make Thurber proud.



# THERE ONCE WAS A TIME

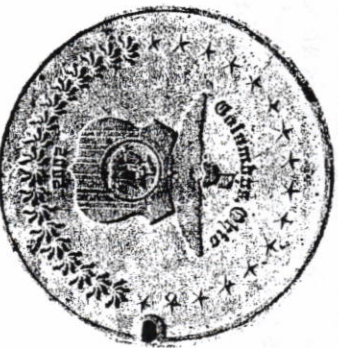
Two sisters are at a party. Both are considered tall when men look at them at such events. It is a random party on a random night in Columbus, Ohio. The two sisters spy a smallish female in the other room with bleached blond hair. They approach her and ask,

"Isn't it you who went out with him for a while?" The smallish girl looks perplexed for a second then responds, "Yeah, that was me." The sisters look at each other and smile. The older one says,

"I was the one who went to prom with." Then the other younger sister explains,

"And I was the first one that he ever kissed." The smallish girl with blond hair laughs and with a smirk replies, "I was the one who deflowered him, isn't this a

chance encounter?" They all have a laugh. The three girls simultaneously think about the forces of the universe that put them all there at that moment. They wonder without verbalizing if perhaps there's a cosmic importance of this incident at a random party, on a random night in Columbus, Ohio. Probably not. It's really not that hard to imagine really. At that exact same moment, somewhere far from this place was the collection of cells and dna and memories that made the three women wonder about the odd symmetries of life that evening. He was probably eating a sandwich, masturbating or questioning the existence of consciousness.



"The third test is whether they voted for Nader or not. If so, then they're just a fucking liberal." Jim is throwing caffeine down his throat, cackling like a mad man. He is a whirlwind. A relentless force of boundless energy in this grey world. I don't think it's just the coffee.

From the front door of the other side of the duplex stumbles a stocky man holding a six pack of Lone Star. He's bulky looking with a septum piercing. He rubs his eyes and teeters back and forth bathed in the morning sun.

"What's up man? Feeling the overhang?" I chirp sympathetically as I am feeling exactly the same from the night before.

"Shit yeah man." He belts out in reply with surprising vigor, "Let me tell you something, and I'm a little afraid to admit but this is the most hung over I think I've ever been and if you knew me that would mean something." I nod in acknowledgment of his statement. There is little I could say to follow besides "I'm so proud of you" as if I was looking at a report card but I don't. A knowing nod is enough. The young man saunters to the railing and breaths in the morning freshness. He is obviously a friend of the new neighbors that moved in recently. The new punk neighbors that turned out to be even more reclusive than the previous "normal" ones.

"So was there a party next door last night?" I ask a seemingly obvious question trying to make small talk.

"What? Was there?" He replies in confusion

"I don't know..I'm asking you, you just stumbled out that door not ten seconds ago hungover." Perhaps he didn't understand the first time. Jim is just smirking in the background hiding his amusement behind a styrofoam cup.

"Shit you should have asked the Tania and Mark, they're the ones that live here." These are the neighbors of course. I just give up this line of questioning, as it is lost to this fellow. I resign and just smile.

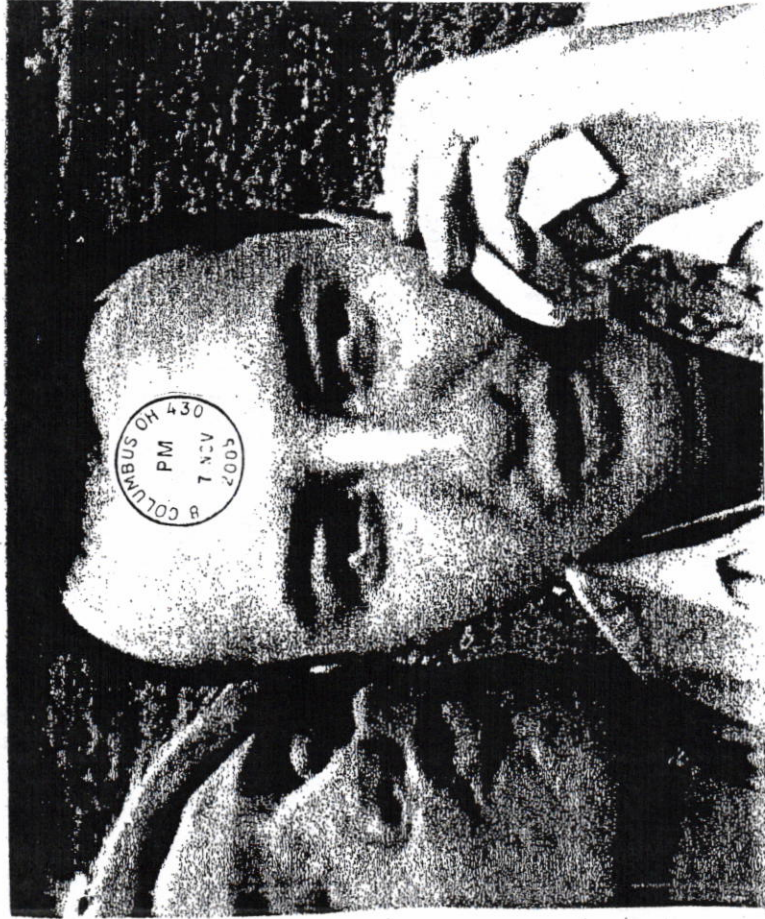
"You know the best cure for a hangover like this is to drink one of these" He changes the subject motioning with his pack of Lone Stars.

"You go on with that then" He looks out at the rising sun one more time and goes back inside from whence he came.



Jim is my ex housemate. He is a union organizer and an older punk rocker. I say "older" punk rocker and not "ex" punk rocker because the distinction is important. Jim balances it well, convincing nurses to join the union by day and being able to bro-down with the punks at night.

"The second is whether they like Eminem. If they don't only because he's sexist then you probably got a whiny pc liberal on your hands. They're focusing on one thing, which is taken out of context and then totally ignoring the fact that he's against the Iraq war in the press and in his music. And plus, Eminem despite his faults speaks of race and class in his music. He's Elvis for Honky America. And Honky America is part of working class America and that is who we are organizing."



Jim's really not all that much older than I am. Only three years, but in the life of punks, which are cram packed with travelling dangerously, short lived romances, eating rotten shit and general recklessness, it's like 10 for every one the rest of humanity.

# OLD MAIN DRAG

The first time I took a drive down this street we were visiting potential colleges for my brother. It was the summer before he was a senior at Finneytown High School. I was halfway there and we were what a nuclear family was at that time. Unfortunately, I had recently discovered punk rock. The trip didn't make sense because my brother had just received a full ride scholarship to a school in Cincinnati yet we still made the journey to the capital city. Perhaps my dad had his hopes set upon his younger son and the golf caddie scholarship he had orchestrated him into a position of receiving. Hopefully the new "fad" his son emulated wouldn't ruin that and one day he could see the Buckeyes play beside him. I didn't think of these things until later, I had my headphones on listening to The Pogues.

I made them drive me to the pawnshops out on East Main to look for a used guitar. My dad thought it was a bad idea, buying a guitar; he knew where it would lead me. He told me to save my money and concentrate on my job at the golf course. I never did learn how to play a guitar, though that didn't stop me from walking the dark and seedy alleys of punk rock. You don't need a guitar to find trouble.

I found it sure enough amid the urban landscape of the town we surveyed that bright summer afternoon. I remember riding down High Street peaking out of the window of our Chevrolet thinking how shitty everything looked. How I wanted to embrace it as soon as possible. It wasn't like the shittiness of my boring street at home. It had a danger that was more exciting then frightening. I had my eyes peeled for back patches and show flyers. The whole avenue seemed carpeted in food wrappers and handstyles. I had never seen so much graffiti in my life. I imagined what it would be like living an existence like this. It seemed so far away and more awesome then what it actually feels now. For awhile it was all I could ever ask for. That was before I knew places like Portland, Minneapolis and the East Bay existed. But fuck all that.



I've been here for almost five years now, but perhaps not much longer. It doesn't seem half as shitty as what it first seemed on that daytrip with my family in 1998. I don't think it was just me getting used to things. This concrete strip has undergone many changes. Under the guise of improving the quality and safety of the neighbor, an aggressive redevelopment program by an organization calling itself the Campus Partners has changed the old main drag. The "student ghetto" is not as seedy as it used to be. Nearly all the bars have been closed in the area and corporate chains have come to replace. "Seedy" independent businesses like Beakman's Bagels and Insomnia are no more. They have knocked down the old brownstones and replaced them with vacant office spaces and redundant corporate options. I remember the stories of those on their way out when I arrived. On weekends the sidewalks were roped off and made one way walking direction on opposing sides. I can't say that I would have liked those days any better than these of corporate containment. If anything, the chaos of the weekend would be relegated to an area I could avoid easier. As I ride back to my house now and the house parties are erupting, I must watch for flying glass at every turn.

Not just have the buildings changed. Over the years, I found all those things that I was dreaming of during that first car ride down High Street when the old facades first flew past me. Their music is different now. I'm one of the "old" punks, not even in my prime, and I've learned some things along the way. Like that it's not on your back or in your ears but what drives all that to be. I've kept my ears out for this sound for some time and I haven't been disappointed. It's amazing that I was able to learn from this geography. It seems as if the buildings are now passing me by. They have witnessed student uprising, football glory, endless college debauchery and cycles of youthful aspiration. I'm just one of their stories now. I do think I'll remember its importance in the early mid 00's. For awhile it was all mines. Now it's just another boring street like the one I grew up on. Maybe I've just become used to the filth of the Student Ghetto or maybe I have become the filth myself, stalking up and down High Street. I may not be anymore prepared to make it in the

# WHERE DO ALL THE PUNKS GO?

"Punk is more than teenage rebellion. It starts there but where does it end?"

## FILTH

There used to be this thing called the punk nod. Like being part of a secret society the punk nod was an unspoken symbol of solidarity between misfits. It summed up so many things that never needed to be said. We all knew where we stood. Somewhere in history it stopped happening with such regularity. I don't why but it all of sudden it just did. I have my theories and if you're reading this then you probably have your own. What is important to know about me when it comes to the punk nod is this. My heart has always been connected to my head. Whatever my heart knows the head has no choice but to follow. That's how I work. And I want you to know I'll be giving the punk nod until the day I die. This is a promise. Whether I get it back in return is a whole another thing. It's become good indicator who is a punk on the outside and who is a punk deep in their heart. There is no need to stop just yet. Long live the punk nod.

Sitting on my porch Jim looks pleased as pie.

"You see at the union we have these questions that we use to weed out the college liberal types from the true radicals that we want organizing at the local." He is carefully sipping from a large Starbucks coffee cup. "Okay for starters there's Starbucks. If someone objects to drinking Starbucks than that's the first indicator. When it comes down to it all coffee, even fairtrade, is a huge world industry based in exportation economies, which are inherently unsustainable. There is no getting around that fact and even Starbucks has fair trade now too soothe your guilty liberal consciousness with moral consumerism.."

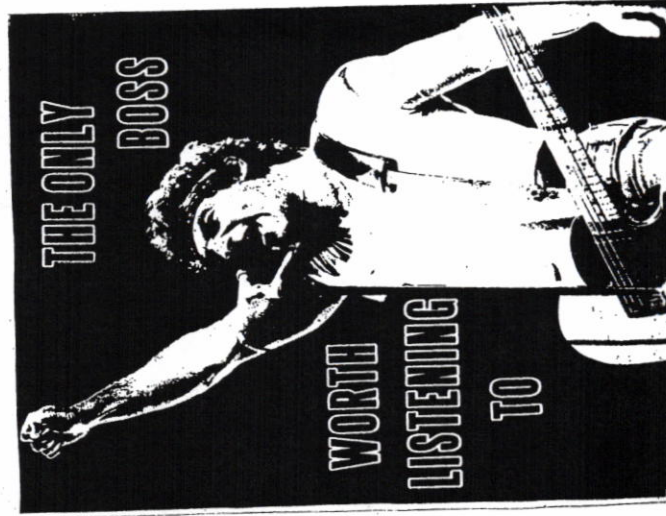


"That's some story kid. Man, imagine that." Ron House is grinning and I know that he likes my story. "Hey Aaron, this guy has a story back here that you gotta hear." He yells across the floor to his sideburned employee at the front register and the fellow begins to head our way. "Oh, he's such a huge Bruce Springsteen fan, go on tell him your story."

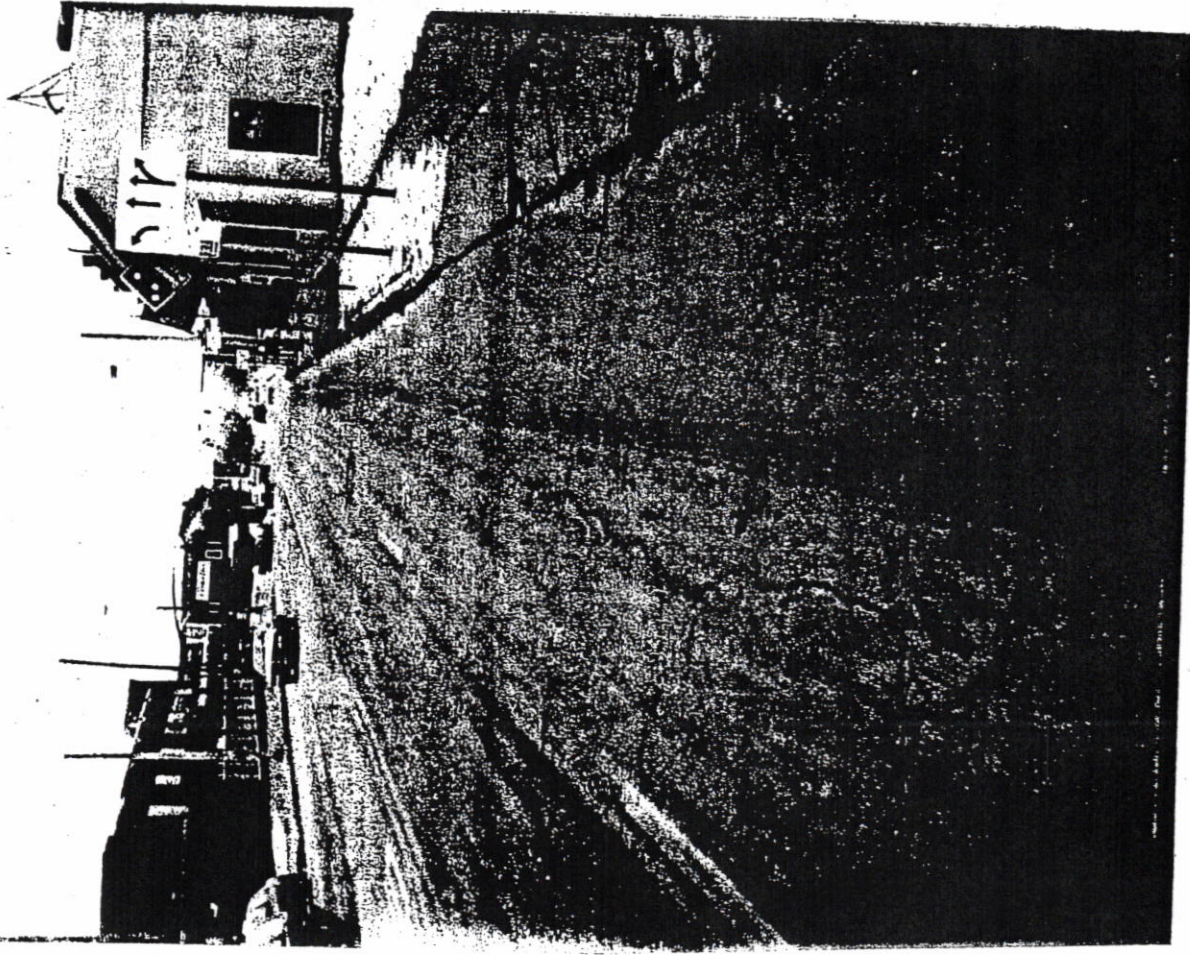
"So what's this all about," Asks the young record store employee.

"Well you see my parents are recently retired and they love going on road trips to really bizarre places..."

Timing is a funny thing. It accounts for so much of what happens in the world yet we have absolutely no control over it. It really pisses me off. When focusing on these things its hard not to think how helpless we are to the powers of coincidence. That's about when I quit and go to the record store to take my mind off of the stultifying effects of higher intelligence. Sometimes this phenomenon helps you find that record you always wanted, or starts you upon a path that takes you through life, other times you get to meet the Boss. It's all about timing. I leave Used Kids another LP closer to my completed Springsteen record collection.



world then when I first stepped down these concrete slabs, but at least underneath I have found comfort to the confusion. And that's more than what most get. In the end, I never made it to one of those football games with dad being too distracted on my quest for filth. And on that matter I sold my guitar long ago and took up the pen. I still listen to the Pogues on my headphones going up and down High Street though. Through it all, "the fad" has persisted.





# YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT



There was an evening once that I sat across from a dear friend in a café. We were playing chess and trying to find all the right moves. We drank our coffees and battled each others' wits upon the two-tone tabletop. If only freeing ourselves was as easy as devising moves four turns ahead like in this game. If it were, we both probably wouldn't have been sitting across from each other here. He was wearing this t-shirt, said he found the summer before at a thrift store out on Cleveland Avenue. The text on the front said

"Columbus, making it great." If that could have only been our battlecry. As much as he wore that t-shirt its slogan rang more like embittered lyrics of one of his favorite drinking songs. We should have been singing Fifteen when instead it was Lucero. In all likelihood the t-shirt was some kind of mid-nineties citywide propaganda engineered by the municipal government for its citizens to feel better about their mediocre town. Perhaps the irony was the solace that eased his mind when donning that shirt. Meanwhile, his pieces were closing in for the checkmate.

"Fried Tofu...blargha, bladda, blah."

Midway through our chess match, we heard these two words in a distant conversation echoing across the room. Where everything else sounded muddled, these two words made our ears perk up. Upon their incantation, we both instantaneously reacted, two hungry hobbits. What can I say? Our eyes met one another's and we let out a hearty laughter in unison. The art of war took a pause for a good second for us to re-enact the moment over and over again. My king let loose a hungry sigh of relief as his dooming fate was put off for the joke to get out of our system. Just a bunch a punks who are always hungry.

day of the mafia's stranglehold on America's strongest labor union. Intrigued by their power and ability to be above the law, he has cultivated a great knowledge and interest to the present day. It's a shame my father is not Italian.

So they are off on one of their road trips having lunch in a Romeo's Coffeehouse in Ybor City. That morning they went on a tour of an old cigar factory. Drinking their coffee and having a bite to eat they start to hear a clanging noise coming from the back of the room. My dad spies a man in his early fifties it seems trying to play the piano located at the far end of the café. To Jim, all he is doing is making a big racket. The retired teamster takes a sip of coffee turns to his wife, "Goddamnit. Who the hell does that think he is? Agh, he's making a racket." Mom just shrugs like she always does and Dad looks around his shoulder to the man continuing at the piano. The man is haggard looking, older than the years should have treated him. Dad, in his cantankerous way, is getting more upset than what he should.

"Why doesn't somebody say something?" In that split second when he would have been that somebody he notices that someone is at the piano man's side and the cacophony has ceased. To Dad's dismay it appears that the stranger is signing an autograph. It is in fact the proprietor of the café, Walter, who is hovering over the piano man.

"There finally!" Says Dad

"Mr. Springsteen it is an honor to have you and your family at my restaurant. Would you mind signing this for me? Me and my wife are both huge fans," The owner, Walter P. Romeo, did not come to scold the stranger at all. Mom starts laughing and dad is dumbfounded before joining in.

"Well imagine that...the Boss!" It's as if the stranger's piano playing was never irritating in the first place. The boss closes the shutter to the piano keys and stands up, shaking the café owner's hand. He strides over to his wife and two young kids at a table in the corner and picks up a menu.

\* \* \*

"Dad would have been ecstatic if he had run into a crime boss, but he was content with meeting Mr. Springsteen that day."



Their conversation ends and the customer leaves the store. It's my turn to hand over unwanted records to Ron House. I place the stack upon the high counter and he takes a look at them.

"I liked your joke." I say and Ron grins. "But I got a story that's even better."

"Oh yeah?" He responds, his eyes unwavering upon my records as he ponders their value to his store.

"Yeah, it's about our mutual friend, the Boss...."

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Jim and Gerry Deller have been through a lot together over the years. Raising two sons, surviving the hell known as the 80's, just trying for that American Dream and realizing it wasn't so easy. Through thick and thin they've stuck together and made it through almost unscathed. Cause in America nobody escapes unscathed. You don't need to listen to Bruce Springsteen to understand this. They are among the lucky ones. Able to retire, though pushing their mid sixties, it's better than most folks like them out there. Seems like it's a luxury these days to retire and have a pension to boot. They'd never imagine that one when they were my age. These are my parents and they deserve every moment of it to come. With what they've had to do to get it, I know they'll enjoy it. I know I may never get this luxury.

They remind me sometimes of a Bruce Springsteen song. One of the happy ones about grit and dedication and stubborn love that gets you through the day. Now silver but not tarnished, they gas up the pick up truck and hit the road with no destination. Every once in awhile I receive postcards from them of new places they've found nestled amid the expanse that is America.

One spring they end up in Ybor City, a small community just north of Tampa, Florida. I have no idea how they really stumble upon places like this, but I have my suspicions. Ybor has a legacy about it for being the seat of the Cuban mafia stateside. No doubt this attracted my dad's curiosity and is the reason they ended up there. You see my father is obsessed with all things pertaining to organized crime. He is a *Maafioso* buff. It all started soon after he got a job as a truck driver, a Teamster in fact, in the 70s. This was during the hey

Tofu has always been a point of contention in my home of Columbus, Ohio. Many a night's conversation has revolved around which Chinese restaurant has the best fried sesame tofu. This is of course the best way to eat said tofu. No 1's huge portions that look like shredded play dough are fried to a crispy perfection. The sauce there is substandard and gummy though. Wong Gei's portions are lacking and the Tofu is meager and usually over fried. Yao's is currently the popular favorite. They are the hot new take out on High Street. Their sesame sauce is sickly sweet and syrupy. The portions are good and the tofu comes in huge rectangular blocks that are angelic in their fried crispiness. I have friends here who only order the fried sesame tofu when they go out to eat at these places.

Back in the Defiance, Ohio days, before Yao's Chinese Bistro came onto the scene, the battle lines were drawn among the punks between those who ate at No 1 and those who ate Wong Gei. That was before I ate Chinese food. Loyalty was derived back then by what was lurking steaming and delicious in your takeout container. I remained obtrusively neutral in the conflict. Many nights were spent debating the superiority of the favored Chinese takeout until dawn hours. Many eyes were blackened, friends lost and food sabotaged. We didn't fuck around.

Members of Defiance, Ohio and friends had a short lived side project entitled TOTAL TURRI. It was a Japanese style hardcore band in the vein of Total Fury devoted to the most famous punk in Columbus, the ever-loved Jimmy Turri.

This joke band, despite its intriguing concept which would never run dry of songwriting inspiration, was in fact rather horrible. It sounded like a bunch of kids that only knew how to play Weakerthans covers take on Gauze. And you know that's not that far from the truth. They had three songs and played only two shows which were both in Columbus. Of the two songs they actually wrote, the one that was reasonably listenable was about the No1/Wong Gei rivalry. There was a particular incident that involved Jimmy Turri. Jimmy, who has apparently went on tour



with every DIY hardcore band since 1989 and will have dreads to his socks very soon, was the foremost champion of the No 1 cause. One evening he came back to his house, where two of the future members of Total Turri also lived. He stepped into his house with a plastic bag of Chinese takeout like many nights before. Upon a surprise search and seizure of Mr. Turri, it was discovered that it was Wong Gei that he was planning on eating that night. Jimmy never lived that one down. For all of those that own the limited number of TOTAL TURRI "the kids aren't all right" CD-Rs, this great moment of the now forgotten struggle lives on immortalized

That was about the time when I first met Jimmy Turri. It was October and I was trying to devise what I would wear for a Halloween costume party I was invited to. Being the hobbit I tend to be, I followed what my stomach told me. Walking down the block from my house, I flipped open the lid to the Urban Outfitters cardboard dumpster. Finding a suitable hunk of cardboard that appeared like it should have previously housed a refrigerator, the first step was complete. Saving this gargantuan box from its destined fate at the recycling center, it was going to be reincarnated into something awesome for Halloween. I was to be the walking manifestation of my hunger come to life. A giant living block of fried tofu.

Rooting through the basement of the Legion of Doom, which was the name of Jimmy Turri's house, I found an old bucket of off-white exterior house paint. Though glossy, it would work perfectly. I slapped the pigment on and sponged on a darker shade of brown to give it a crispy looking quality of tofu that has been fried. For added emphasis I bit off pieces of electrical tape to make a label that spelled "tofu". I didn't want anyone to mistake me for a gigantic bar of soap. I left the new costume in the alley overnight for it to dry. As I walked back home, I laughed maniacally at my genius costume making skills.

and love of Americanness. His outspoken views and support for Vietnam veterans and organized labor. His street smart style. Wailing saxophone solos. His fine ass in denim. Whoa! The list goes on. What is important is that I love the Boss.

The Boss was actually just in Columbus not so long ago. Before Election Day he accompanied Democratic candidate John Kerry on a last minutes whirlwind tour of the key electoral states. Not to miss the goldmine of electoral votes that is Ohio, the heart of it all, Kerry gave an impassioned speech about raising the bar for America's struggling middle class. What he meant to say was working class but politicians know that saying "W.C." would make them sound like a socialist, which would be political suicide. Bruce, playing the role of griot for Kerry, was there to throw his support against Bush and performed two songs for the masses. I was in my friends' apartment eating dinner when I heard the melody of "No Surrender" coming through the window like a fall breeze. Miles away on the campus green they were holding their pep rally. It was sickening to know my hero was there standing next to that Democratic shithouse. But I guess it's better than doing nothing in the face of four more year of Bush. Oh Bruce, what a world we live in...

Ron House, sometimes surly and sometimes quite gracious, is still talking to the same customer from when I came in. It seems he's in the gracious categorization today. I can't help but eaves drop on his all but too loud conversation he's been carrying on.

"So did you hear that Bruce Springteen is putting out a new album?" My ears perk up over mention of my idol, the Boss. Enticed, I listen closer as I continue to flip. "I guess since Kerry lost the election this November the Boss's career plan's needed a new direction. Since he won't be appointed to Kerry's cabinet as the secretary of the newly created Ministry of Blue Jeans, old Bruce needed to find a new source of income." Ron proclaims and I can't help but smirk. The middle aged customer begins to chuckle. "He's going it alone this time, no E-Street Band on this one, just him and his guitar. And I hear that his new songs are really anti-Bush."



not that motivated. Some days you'll come here and see that some poor fool has just sold of what looks like their record collection to make rent. Judging upon by what "new" used records are in the racks those days, you can probably guess who it was.

Up the stairs I trudge surrounded by that weeks show flyers. I got some records under my arm that I don't listen to anymore. Hopefully Ron House, the crimson faced proprietor of this establishment, will give me much in trade for them. I walk through the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor entrance and nervously scan the sales floor. I nod to the clerk at the counter who nods back with his muttonchop sideburns framing a gaunt face. Ron House is at the other end talking loudly to a customer. I mosey over to the used vinyl and start flipping through them one by one starting at A.

I see the same old records I see everytime I come here. Ry Cooder, This is not the Dream Syndicate Live Album, Krokus. The typical hubris of neglected and unwanted American pop music. All forgotten and all left here till the end of time. I come across a knot of hardcore records, looks like someone had to make rent this month the hard way. I keep flipping. There are always multiple copies of The Boss's records in the S section. Maybe I'll finally fill out my Bruce Springsteen LP collection after all these years with my imminent trade credit.

The Boss has a special place in my heart. Ever since that fateful day when I seventeen and in that antique mall with my brother, I've had a fond affection for Mr. Springsteen. There I found a crate of his LPs that were priced at 50 cents a piece. I shelled out a couple bucks for the near mint condition slabs of vinyl and my love affair has been unwavering. There's many a good reason why I like him. His ability to embrace the larger than life spirit of rock and roll and still be humble and honest. It's a hard to find mix that is lacking from rock music these days. I think he was one of the last to pull it off. His portrayal of everyday life in America and social reality that pervades his hook laden music. His distrust and skepticism of the powerful that mirrors my own views and upbringing. His bitter hope. The beautiful truth and sadness emanating from his story-like songs. His disgust

I made sure not to tell anyone about the culinary monstrosity I would transform into come October 31<sup>st</sup>. If it was to be a full moon, I would claim to be a were-tofu. This rare strain of lycanthropy claimed to have first been spotted near dumpsters in the late seventies is highly lethal to come into contact with. It is feared for its intense hatred of people in uniforms and meat-eaters. It is known to form murderous packs to stalk the suburban night with its cousins were-seitan and were-tempeh. Watch the fuck out.

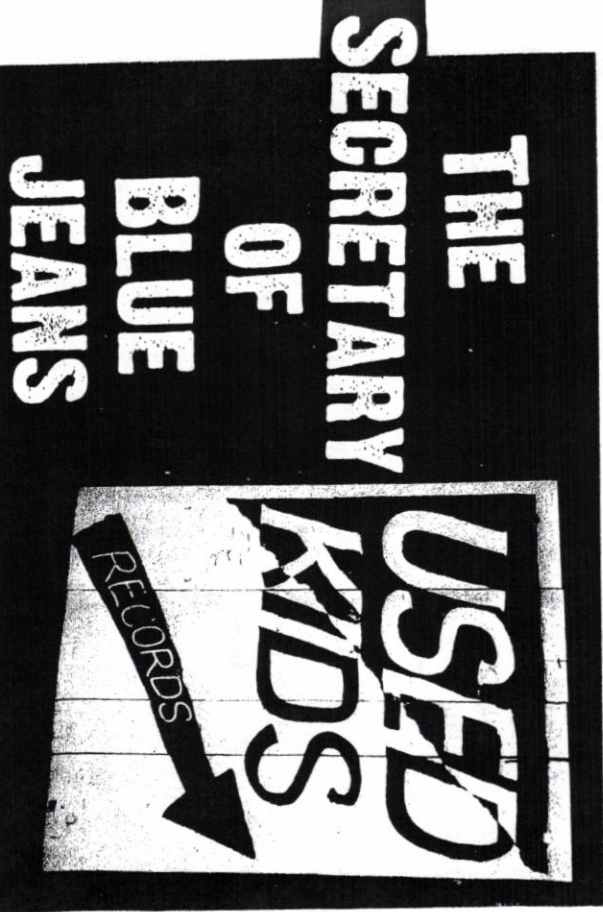
I was an unexpected hit at my Halloween costume party. It took place at the infamous Hunter avenue house which has currently become squatted by crazy anarchists that worship garbage. This tofu had quite a tumultuous time at its party though. Despite the label, I had to explain my fried soy based nature to inebriated zombies, anamorphic tigers and bad ass biker chicks. This fried tofu got a little drunk, saturated not with sesame sauce, but with cheap keg beer. The residual fumes of the layers of gloss enamel left Mr. Tofu feeling a little funny as well. The worst part was the treatment I received from said inebriated zombies, anamorphic tigers and bad ass bike chicks whom I thought were my "friends". The drawback of my refrigerator box tofu costume was its extreme cumbersome nature. I could move my arms all right but I could barely bend my knees. I could only look straight ahead out of the circle I cut for my face. If I wanted to peer to the side I needed to turn my entire rectangular body in that direction. It made dancing to the pulsating rhythms of Halloween quite difficult but oddly entertaining. I mostly jumped up and down quickly in a straight legged fashion, moving my arms up and down as rapidly as a tofu could. Quite tiring it was not enough protein in my moist lumpen form to sustain this kind of activity. This was not the only reason my dancing ended quickly that night. The now belligerently drunk zombies, anamorphic tigers and bad ass biker chicks thought they saw this happy fried tofu as an easy target of abuse to amuse themselves with. Preying upon my acute arc of vision and movement, this tofu was pummeled and slapped around the dance floor as he tried repeatedly to get his bean curd groove on. This led to a frantic burst of fisticuffs



in the middle of the party and an ensuing wrestling match between a Charlie Chaplin lookalike and yours truly, General Tso, commander of the Tofu Legions of the Wong Gei Empire.

Fed up and dejected, this sad lump of tofu sauntered onto the porch. Greeted by the cool October night I struck up a festive conversation with one of the nicer party goers at the Hunter Ave House. Little did I know but I was being set up by an attractive, yet deceptive pair of eyes. As I yammered on about something probably really dumb, my fried crispy exterior was in danger. From behind, a kneeling assailant dressed like a cartoonish caricature of a late 70's pimp was trying to ignite my delicious body with a lighter. By the time I realized what was going on and tripped over the person wrapped in gold and purple, whom I also thought was a so called "friend", my rear was blackened and smoking with noxious fumes. My tofu-ass rolled around on the lawn for a few good seconds until the flames of my scorched hide were smothered. Goddamnit, I thought, the life of a fried tofu is hard

Back home, dejected and depressed I sat across the room from the tofu shell I thought I could be. I surveyed the damage done that night. Black soot licked up the backside of the painted textured surface of the cardboard. That paint sure got on fire pretty quick. What a fucked up, yet hilarious night. Next time I eat some fried sesame tofu at No 1 or Wong Gei or Yao's I'm going to realize how hard they have it in life. Looking at the burnt section of my beautiful, yet horrible creased and beer soaked costume I came up with what I would be for next Halloween. Taking a cue from the blackened area of the rectangular frame before me and the oppression I felt as a living tofu I would find some black paint to cover the rest. Inspired by my budding passion for Anarchism, next Halloween's party would be greeted by the black bloc, or more specifically a black block, and an angry tofu identity concealed underneath in all its gyrating, getting its groove on literal abuse indignation. Fried bean curd of the world unite! Direct Action for Tofu Liberation!



Puttering around High Street again, I got the day off work. Locking my bike to the street sign I stop to decipher the graffiti outside of the record store. It never works. I haven't been here in awhile but I'm back to what I usually do on empty days. Bike riding, soda drinking, hanging out at Kinko's, petty theft, trying to look intimidating, checking email and browsing the used record bins. All the typical things.

Going to Used Kids is a staple activity if you live where I do. It's the type of record store you ought to go every couple days so you don't miss that gem you've been looking for. Anything you want travels through these bins, you just have to have the right timing. Or so I like to believe. I like going because it's something to do. Much like one of my other boring day habits, email checking, you're probably going to get nothing but you enjoy the routine anyhow. Probably you'll run into somebody you know, another matter contingent upon timing.

In all honesty I'm not much of a record collector. But Used Kids has a special allure for me. Concerning what I like to put on my turntable, the employees have no concept of anything when it comes to punk and hardcore. If I were opportunistic I would probably start selling what I find here on Ebay and get ten times the investment, but I don't. I'm



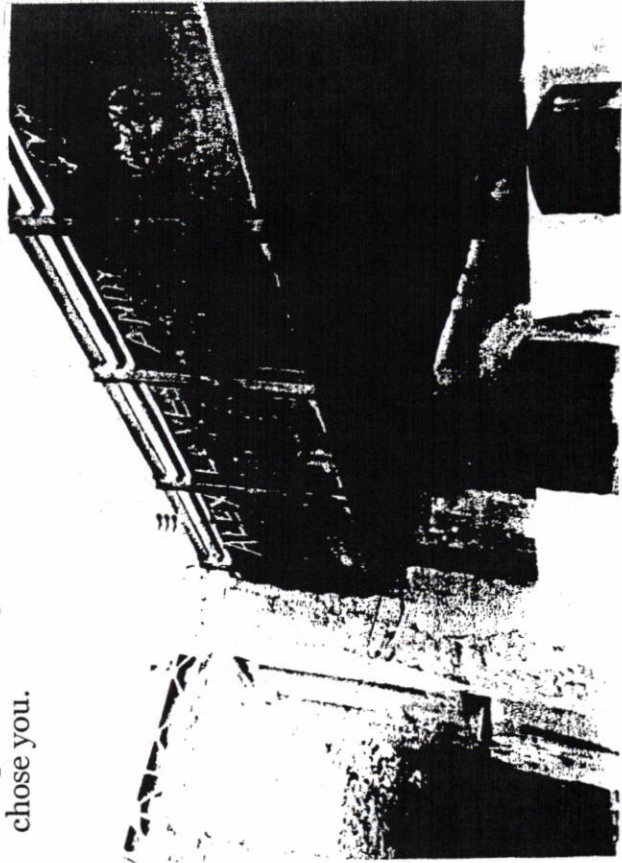
zealousness," I finish. With an amazingly charming look of relief she begins,

"Ever since I ran into you again at the show this week at Taco Ninja, I knew I was going to kiss you on New Years." Before she can finish the end of her sentence I kiss her again, putting my arms around her waist as hers snake around mine.

"That was for midnight."

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It's a good thing my bike got a flat tire on the way to the party. If it had not been serendipitously punctured by some guardian angel than I probably would have tried to ride home in drunken invincibility. I probably wouldn't have made it home and this story would have been a tragedy, not a romance. Being too drunk for any sort of romance that night, I promise we would hang out soon and I unlocked my bike to go home. In the end, she never once calls me back and something that could have been great turns into nothing. The next day, recovering from my hang over, I find a scrap of paper in the front pocket of my jeans. I didn't remember putting it there but as I open the note up it all comes back. It is a scribbled phone number, barely decipherable, signed Ricardo. Ah, Ricardo, I should have chose you.



# I WENT TO A PARTY LAST NIGHT....

I never really listened to Jawbreaker when I was younger. The punk music that I was exposed to was less cerebral, less adult and more aggressive and adolescent. Jawbreaker was a band that I started listening to when I was bored, curious, and had access to Napster at college. I kept listening because the people I lived with at the sweet life, and will in particular, loved it. There are so many good jawbreaker songs, and there are songs that can be appreciated for themselves and not necessarily for their personal relevance. I think pretty much everyone has a favorite Jawbreaker song that resonates personally with them. One song for me is "bad scene everybody's fault", just because I think that's what parties and relationships really are like and it's always nice to see one's perception validated in song.

It was called a hags and dandies party and from what I gathered it was Ana and Connie's concoction. The hag part of the party was going to be at a house that I dubbed the "hag collective" and whose name sort of stuck. The whole hag thing started when Ryan made fun of Jen for hanging out with some of the older ladies from her job. "I bet she's a hag," Ryan said, and he was probably right. Hell, Jen's really a hag when it comes down to it with her job in human resources, her dog birthday parties, and interest in furniture. The joke just kept on growing and a lot of girls in town sort of adopted the hag mantle for the fun of it. They would sit and gossip or dig up ridiculous outfits like gold trimmed puffy nylon windsuits. So it's not surprising that there was a hag themed party eventually. I don't know where the dandies part of the party theme came from but I'll guess that Ana



thinks that boys all dolled up is kind of funny. At least it wasn't "pimps and hos", a horrifying party theme that seems pretty common in Columbus and I'm sure in college towns nationwide. I don't think most people really got the dandy part anyway. Most boys just came in dresses. I ended up wearing a slinky black skirt with a delicate black tank top. It was frighteningly comfortable.

So the party had most of the elements in the Jawbreaker song. Let's start with makeout sessions. As I was leaving the party, I noticed two separate pairs of my friends happily rolling on the floor and kissing sloppily. There was a spin the bottle game at one point. The next day I heard of various awkward encounters in various bedrooms of the house. The sexual tension was so thick you could "f" it. Really though, it wasn't innocent, but it wasn't all that creepy. It seemed like the crazy sexual energy that only the onset of summer can bring where people are just drunk enough, or just comfortable enough, or just tried enough of holding in their feelings that it just erupts into a flurry of sloppy kisses awkward fondling and confused words uttered in dark bedrooms. I feel like this week people will either be elated or terrified, but I don't think that as long as people don't freak out, it will be a good thing for most.

There were also bicycle messengers, well at least former ones, or bicycle shop employees, or assorted bike punks. But the real surprise was when a bunch of kids rolled up to the party on bikes laden with mysterious bundles and packs. It turned out that these kids were the "flying rutabaga cycle circus", a group travelling from St. Louis to Philadelphia singing, dancing, performing skits and puppet shows to spread the word about the dangers of car culture, genetically modified foods and the biotech industry. That night costumes and instruments were removed from the bike packs and they put on a quick show of some of their routines. It was a lot of fun and gave the party a bizarre little kick that made it something that was exciting and interesting to me and not something that I wanted to leave right away. The circus put on a performance the next day on the OSU campus which I took my parents to

At past New Years Eve parties I always tried to ignore the overturning of midnight and the pre-cursory build up of exuberance. I thought it terribly cliché in my adolescent pompousness. This year it actually happens without me even trying. The one time I wanted actually to be aware for it my drunk ass jabberjaws right through it. Fifteen minutes into the New Year I realize I am too late. My crush bursts onto the back porch in an errant frenzy, complaining how she didn't kiss anyone in the first moment of 2005. I could cry tears of beer.

At that moment, I know exactly what to do and say. The New Year has passed but it is not too late. My determination is fueled not just by all the liquid courage. I know she was thinking the same thing as me the whole night or else she wouldn't have said that. Or so my drunken wisdom tells me so.

In the narrow strip between the side of her house and the neighbor's fence, we finally find each other alone for the first time all night. Our feet approach one another's atop the glistening January 1st sidewalk. The snow has melted and a thin layer of mud coats the bottoms of our shoes as they surprise one another. Before I can even finally deploy plan B she kisses me. She beats me too it. Having me up against the linoleum siding of her duplex, our lips caress in a long overdue passion. We both come up for air I make my confession,

"You know how on New Years they have that tradition of kissing the person next to you when the ball drops and the Dick Clark robot calls in the New Year on every channel on TV?"

"Yeah?" She responds, grinning ear to ear. Loving her heavy Michigan accent, how it always sounds like she is so excited and flabbergasted at the same time I continue.

"Well," I pause awkwardly for a crucial second, staring into her ridiculously wide open eyes. Must be another common trait for Michiganders, and it's irresistible. ". I umm came to this here party knowing exactly who I was going to be standing next to when the clock struck midnight"

"Me too," She exclaims drawing nearer.

"And I sorta lost track of myself in my drunken

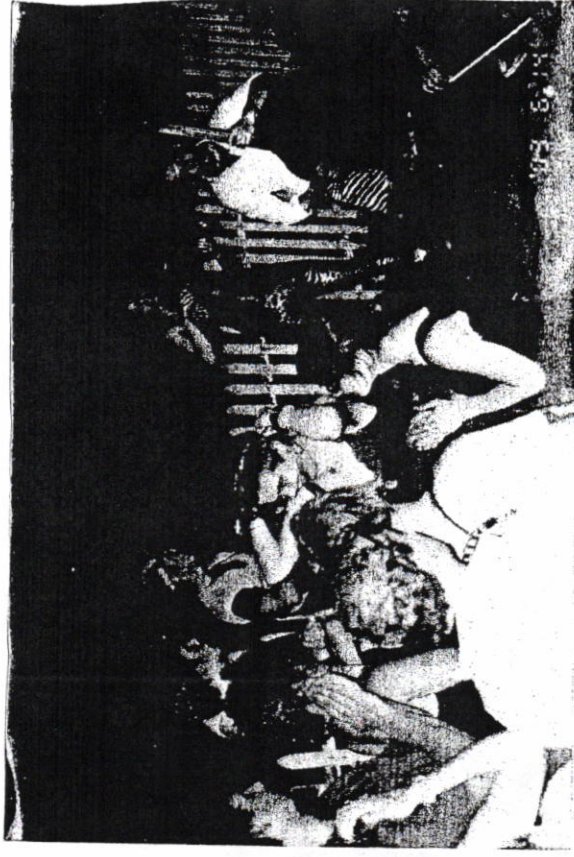


He is whispering sweet nothings into my ear and I am grinning bashfully. Though not exactly my style, I am susceptible to anything when given enough alcohol. This is one of those nights. One of the beauties of drunkenness is the ability to be totally oblivious. This is one of those nights as well. As I dance away, our taught male bodies separated by mere strips of denim, Mikeal and Tim sit on the couch mere inches away in horror. This no doubt will be further fodder for their excuses not to drink. I can't blame them really. I am losing sight of her. This is not who I came here to kiss. His tongue is in my mouth and that's all that's on my mind.

Before the clock strikes midnight I pee in the alley on the neighbor's garage door four more times and fall headlong down the staircase. A friend informs me that the boy that I was dancing with previously had been upstairs sucking off someone else minutes before he saw me dancing with him. I'm not worrying about these things at all. I go outside on the front porch to get some fresh air. I discover a mysterious note attached to my bike which is locked to the railing. Surveying the flat tire that it now sports, I retrieve the note. It reads, "Brian = Sucks ^ 1000". No doubt the handiwork of Mikeal and Tim, I know their handwriting. This is how they show affection of course. They are nowhere to be seen. Not my fault if I have more fun at parties. I am sure they enjoyed seeing their dear foolish friend grinding, humping and slobbering all over some random gay black hipster.

At the expected moment of the night I am not where I am supposed to be locking lips with my trainhopping babe. No, the New Years comes in without me even realizing it. A much more fitting manner to bring in 2005 than my premeditated romantic antics prevailing. I am caught up explaining to the same law school student friend how more than anything I wish I could move back to my hometown to live and flourish there. A logical continuation of our previous conversation. And of course, we are hovering around the keg.

There were punks at the party, or at least the punks who weren't at the show at the Legion or the Strike Anywhere show at Bernies but really at a party who behaved unlike any other type of kids at a college party. After the bike folks finished performing, Will convinced the rest of us to grab our instruments out of the van and play a few songs. It was bad because it's hard to play when other people are drunk. It used to drive me nuts because I thought I was the one fucking up, but now I realize it's a team effort. It was a lot of fun though. We had been playing songs acoustic for friends a lot lately and I really like doing it. I guess I'm always worried that people will get sick of it, or maybe that I like the attention too much, but it's nice to hear people singing together and the songs are kind of about all of us. It always seems nice and special even if they are just songs.



So I was wearing a dress the whole night at the party, as were most of the boys, and seriously, not to be conceited, but we looked good. The next morning Will recounted an anecdote where some dudeish neighbor came to the party and asked him, "So are all of you fags or what?" Later, as the dude was leaving the party, he approached Will and said, "I know this is fucked up, but do you think you could kiss me." Will declined. Becca and I left the party and walked back to her apartment together with both of us still wearing our party dresses. I got a bunch of whistles and propositions, but nothing too aggressive. I was amazed. I thought, "I'm going to



make it all the way home without being accosted." We made it to Yao's parking lot when we came upon a group of bro-dogs crowded around an SUV. I don't remember the line exactly but it was something like, "Get a life...fag...suck a cock in five minutes." The more shocking thing was when another in the party offered, "I'll stick my cock in your ass," which seemed a little odd given that he seemed so averse to anything that in any way challenged his rigid notion of gender roles. Despite the violent undertones, I guess it gives some credence to the whole homophobes are driven by latent homoerotic desires theory. I started to try to make some articulate unthreatening response, but the words didn't come. I still fantasize that one time I'll make a comment so clever, so intelligent, that it will appeal to the basic reason of the dude and they'll wake as if from a daze and say, "You know, it's no big deal if a dude doesn't act or look like me, or wears a dress sometimes, and I guess it's not a big deal if a dude fucks a dude either." But that will probably never happen and it sure didn't that night. They just walked away across the parking lot shouting a few more threats and we kept walking back to the apartment. I was left feeling a little as if I had somehow lost the showdown, but for the first time that feeling was brief and unimportant.

## STORY BY GEOFF HING



is hard to spot, dashing into my arc of vision and then out faster than my ability to react. The night's anticipation is teetering on the brink. Is she avoiding me? Am I avoiding her? Why am I so nervous? Is alcohol going to solve this problem? Of course not but then why am I drinking? Faster than what I had expected I chase my sobriety away. Or I shall say more like chased it down, frothy beer after frothy beer.

Alcohol has great power in society. It has had much influence with the direction of civilization. The old cold one has done great things for the canon of English literature through the ages. For as much artistic breakthroughs it has fermented in the heart of man, it has likewise proven to be its crutch. For all the great political actions goaded into existence, its disasters mirror it such. This night has me steeped before that chasm. My insecurities about my true desires were being channeled into a destructive pastime which risks all my liplocking intentions. Kissing her on any old night would be fine but doing it as the New Year comes into being would be perfect. As the alcohol clouds my determination and distracted me, my romantic plans are unraveling.

I find myself still on the back porch playing goal keeper with the keg. I am explaining to an old friend, who is now in law school, the cultural legacy, even after assimilation, of the Irish and German immigrant communities of Cincinnati. We both grew up there in such families and marvel at the conservative nature of our ancestors. As much as I love having this conversation, this is not why I came. I excuse myself from the conversation which has run its course and make my way into the alley. I empty my bladder onto the neighbor's garage and pitch my plastic cup into the municipal trashcan. I resolve to see to this crush predicament.

The party has evolved, or devolved, into a maniac hive of sweaty humanity. All too easily I am sucked into the party and lost amongst its whirling appendages. Before I know it I am dancing seductively not with my unfortunate crush but in the arms of a handsome young fellow named Ricardo.



# LITTLE DEAD BIRDS

There once was a time when we all lived in Columbus if you can believe it. I left too early only to come back to say goodbye again. Before this era passed into memory, my friends had gotten matching tattoos. Etched into their flesh were upside down birds. The drawing was simplistic, almost whimsical in its cartoonishness. The poor little birds all had X's for eyes. I guess that meant that they're dead. There were seven in total. Seven friends with ink injected into their arm or back or ankle.

This image first appeared in a cartoon that Will drew for his friend Morgan. It documented their ramblings on the West Coast done the year prior. The cartoon was a gift for his longtime friend and traveling companion chronicling the duo camping out in the Redwoods of Northern California. Will came back home for a short while before heading back to those Redwoods to live in their presence for good. In the time between he started a band that went on to gain some notoriety in the punk underground. Morgan's cartoon was used in the linear notes for this band. They called themselves Defiance, Ohio and were originally from Columbus. Oddly enough not one of the members is from or had any ties from the small town in North East Ohio that used to be a fort during the Indian Wars. Even more ironic the band no longer even inhabits the state of their moniker.

In the comic a panel depicts Will and Morgan finding a baby bird dead and deceased upon the forest floor. Its body untouched by any telling signs of destruction, perhaps it had fallen from its flight after a heart attack for all that they knew. The serenity and peace that its fragile little corpse contained left an impression upon young Will under the Redwoods' canopy.

The image of this little dead bird that Will penned has become synonymous with this band he plays in now. In many ways the dead little thing has gone on to be emblematic of Defiance, Ohio much like Jawbreaker's German Cross. I'm suspicious that perhaps it was a victim of the acid rain that Will sung of in the particular song that the comic was used for and inspired, "Chad's Favorite Song"

reaction, I really don't care. There is a strange coincidence that effects my attractions. I always fall for the girls that ride trains. Even before I find out that they've ridden the rails, like me, at one point in their past, I have usually fallen for them. I've just counted them up in my head and it's way over half. Where my friend Justin only dates small Asian girls and my other friend Aaron only dates girls that look like Bjork, it seems I only date trainhopping girls. But I don't find it out until later. Maybe it's just my type. They always leave me feeling crushed out.

Trainhopping is not a very widely popular activity where I live at on the map of subcultural American underground. I honestly don't live in a place where a lot of women, let alone men have done these things. Yet here I am. At her house for a highly anticipated new years party. We have been playing cat and mouse for months, meekly talking to one another when bumping into each other habitually at bar, party or show. So often we forget that they're just as much scared of us as we are of them. Ah, the fluttering joy of the modern crush. All that is to be resolved in the New Year.

Making it to their address we approach the door. Each of us is too hesitant to be the first to go for the door. I understand their excuse, they hate parties. But myself, well I'm just a little nervous. I thrust it out of me and unpoetically barge through the thresh hold. The party is hospitable, a perfect setting for a short story. Familiar faces mixing with not so familiar ones. Everyone's faces are bright and smiling, reveling their youth. Music is blaring and people are running up and down the staircase. Its looks as if it will be a promising evening. It's all going down at the duplex residence of my lingering crush. I make my way to the back porch; she is nowhere to be seen. There is a keg outback and a handful of figures huddled around it as if they are a sports team on timeout. It has been a long time since I have sipped a 40 ounce of fine malt liquor or any of its mirthful cousins. Perhaps it's what might make what looks like a good night a little bit more interesting. Hovering over the keg upon brink of insobriety, I go for it. I seize the night by the handle of the keg tap. Meanwhile, she



תורת התורה

I BELIEVE IN SOMETHING, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, IT'S EITHER THE FUTURE OR THE END. IT'S EVERY REASON I DO OR DON'T GET OUT OF BED.

WE LIVE IN THE UNHAPPY SHADOWS OF SKRAPERES, FREIGHT TRAINS, AND MALLS, TO A SOUNDTRACK OF NUCLEAR WARHEADS + BOMBS. ADDED TO POWER, ADDED TO AMORTITY, MONEY, AND SUCCESS, WITH OTHER ADDITIONS, DO WE EVEN KNOW HOW TO LIVE?

THE SUN IS SHINING THROUGH DISTANT  
BITTER CLOUDS THAT MAKE ME CHOKE  
AND COUGH AND SCREAM SITTING HERE  
A LONE WATCHING ACID RAINDROPS FALL...  
... THIS IS NOT THE LIFE I WANT TO LEAD.

**NEW YEARS EVE**

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"You know you're going to hate it," I say, but we continue walking down Indianola. It's a wet night out, the blacktop streets of the student ghetto are glistening from the day's rain. It feels surprisingly good considering the time of year. Mikeal and Tim argue incessantly, with outrageous body language, over comic books the whole way there. I'm looking forward for a party for once.

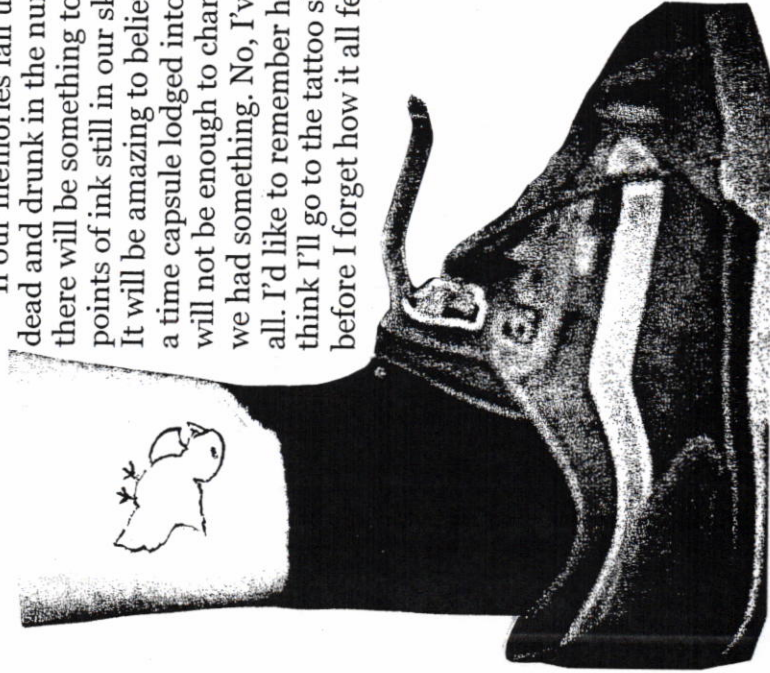
Attraction is something I never understood and I wish to leave it at that. Life gives us wonders like these and it's best not to question them. Maybe it's a just a big chemical



for a show I am so happy to have them back for a night. But it's not the same as it used to be. I know my fate will never be as close to them as it was then. When I see my friends and their tattoos I think of how lucky I truly am to know these people. That is all I really need etched into me.

I never got a little dead bird tattoo. Even after all their belated encouragement. I felt as if it would be too little, too late. It was one of those things you had to be there for. Those lines are for part of story that I did not write myself into. And I have no intention of getting one either. I have thought about it too much, even to this day. I don't need to leave a corpse with symbols to remind me of those times. They've given me more than any tattoo can symbolize. Most people go through life believing in nothing. Or at best, believing in things they don't understand. In that short time span, these friends reminded me there are things left to believe in. Myself and my ability to love.

If our memories fail us and they will someday, dead and drunk in the nursing home or the gutter, there will be something to help us remember. Little points of ink still in our skin from so many years ago. It will be amazing to believe that they are still there, a time capsule lodged into our arms. Perhaps love will not be enough to change the world but at least we had something. No, I've changed my mind after all. I'd like to remember how those days were. I think I'll go to the tattoo shop tomorrow morning before I forget how it all felt.



Nearly a three full years has passed since we first heard that melodramatic song. We all cringed to the parts about acid rain, living in the woods and eating berries but loved it anyways. Or at least I did. It sucked us in with its relentless rhythms and idealism much needed in our dismal mid Ohioan metropolis. It's been a while since I came back to the birthplace of the little dead birds. My experiences in this town are much different than in that era. When I came crawling back, most all the little dead birds were no longer nested here. I couldn't help but feel a bit melancholy. Why wasn't I there getting little birds inked into my forearm along with them? I am told it occurred on a whim during spring tour in Memphis. I was probably somewhere in the middle of butt fuck nowhere France eating goat cheese with thick ankled country folk.

That year was what I think everybody would agree was a nothing short of memorable. I guess that's why we get these reminders emblazoned upon our skin, to never forget. Not that we ever could but our histories sometimes need to be recognized in ways that words or songs just can't fulfill. There was knowledge that something was different about this delineated section of hours, minutes and seconds. It was a season for milemarkers.

In that short stretch of months I think a lot of us felt more at home in world. For some it was a first time of being "one of the punks". Before that punk was a personal rebellion for me. This was more than a scene. It was a community. One comprised of outsiders even within the so called punk scene of the city. In such an unsuspecting place at such an unusual time in all of our lives, we found it in the only place it can ever be found. Not in some record but each other. We weren't changing the world, but we were making our little corner livable. No matter how dismal or hopeless of a place you think you are, there no doubt are sets of hungry hands searching for you just as much as you search for them. Isn't this what teen movies are all about? The awkward maladjusted D&D playing booger picker discovering companionship in the pimply badly dressed cross eyed flute player. Don't you know that these kids go on to be punk rockers and the great artists, lovers and revolutionaries of the world? Just trying to see our own hopes and desires in



each others' eyes. To look what's behind the records, the instruments, the D&D manuals. That's what happened. That's what I've carried inside me since those days. I'll let that be what those lines of ink stand for.

They tell me that Defiance, Ohio receives emails and letters from fans asking permission for the little dead bird as a tattoo design. One fellow has it as piece that covers his entire back. I couldn't help but cringe upon hearing this. No one who wasn't there at the time could know what these things mean. I began taking possession of these experiences meant to be shared. Punk rock has always meant momentum. But is it wrong to feel that this is some kind of encroachment upon something I feel was special and fleeting? It's hard not to become possessive of the things that matter the most to you. This band, all of the people around at that time meant so much more to me than what I usually let on. What that symbol represents to me is wholly unique to who we were then and who I was. I can't look at it without thinking how if it wasn't for that subtle combination of people and place I would be a lot different. If it wasn't for that music that emanated from all of us, I would probably be too cynical for my young age.

It's hard not be possessive of the past and part that I played in it. Many paths were set upon which have taken us far in the years since. I can't forget how much this band and their songs have meant to so many kids out there. It would be unfair to be critical just because "they weren't there in the beginning". I would have learned nothing. I think of how many punk bands that have inspired me and have given me meaning to the rhythm of my steps through the years, especially those I discovered 5 years, 10 years, 20 years too late. It's hard not to realize that this era has been long gone. They have changed a lot since I first say them practicing in the basement of the Legion of Doom. Not better, not worse, but something different, something for somebody else. Their music will be a soundtrack for a period in my life that'll be impossible to forget. All youthful optimism aside, it was a time when my favorite band was my best friends.

I hear the cynics say, "All your records will crumble into dust, what is good never lasts." There are two types of people in the world. There are those that accept this and wallow in nostalgia. Then there are those whose acceptance is something that drives them towards life. To be part of something like this was a lucky circumstance. A fateful coincidence that could have happened to anyone. It just happened to me. I'm sure it happens often in different ways. The urgency of punk rock is from how it slips through our fingers. Faster than meager paychecks and rotting dumpstered vegetables. We are constantly changing and figuring out how to fight this world while holding onto some sense of self and identity. It takes a song and a chorus to hold it together sometimes. That's why it's folk music. Those months will stay gold forever but it is something that is done. I learned to be this second type of person. The temporal nature of these times makes us recognize them for what they are. Maybe that's the essence of punk rock. Letting the music wash over you and take you away. Hanging on tight to the moments that don't come too often. Maybe that's just life in general, no matter what it looks or sounds like.

Three years it will be since that night in a Memphis tattoo parlor I was conspicuously absent. The little dead birds have almost all flown away and brought with them this story wherever they have landed. I won't forget how important it was to be at this place at that time. A place that seems so foreign to me again. I hope that others will someday seize this city like we tried. In Columbus I see a new generation of kids eager to take up these haunts. I smile when I see them around town and know my time has come. This nest belongs to someone else now. Perhaps it's time to see if my wings still work. Though it was just music, it felt like a social movement. A social movement big enough for a basement. Yet, at times I feel like these things never transpired. In these moments I wish I had something under my sleeve to remind me. Whenever Defiance, Ohio comes around